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Press Release

Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> July

## **Domestic abuse study shows men less likely to be perceived as victims than women**

According to an academic study led by Dr Ben Hine, a trustee of the ManKind Initiative domestic abuse charity and a Senior Lecturer in Psychology at the University of West London (UWL), gender stereotypes may still play a significant role in how victims of domestic abuse are perceived.

Published in the *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*<sup>1</sup>, the psychology study asked 178 undergraduate students to allocate 'victim' or 'perpetrator' labels to men and women in a range of scenarios varying by type of violence and the proportion of abuse perpetrated by each party. Participants were also asked to make judgements on severity of crimes as well as justice outcomes for hypothetical instances of violence between heterosexual couples.

The study showed that men were less likely to be judged as victims, more likely to be seen perpetrators, and less likely to be encouraged to seek help at the hands of an abusive partner, even when the evidence suggested their partner was the primary abuser. In addition, in all scenarios, men were less likely to be advised to call the police or seek help for violence suffered at the hands of a female partner.

The findings therefore suggest that gendered models of abuse focused on depictions of dominant, aggressive men acting out violence towards vulnerable women may be informing these judgements rather than the information available.

This research is published when the Government is drafting statutory guidance to organisations such as the police and local authorities on how to deliver their duties as allocated in the Domestic Abuse Bill. This study thus reinforces concerns raised by the ManKind Initiative and the authors of this study that societal stereotypes, which may prevent male victims from being recognised or supported, will not be addressed in the Guidance.

**Dr Ben Hine, Senior Lecturer in Psychology at UWL, who led the study said,** "The findings suggest that stereotypes around gender and domestic abuse had a damaging impact on participants' judgements on who was the perpetrator or victim in the abusive scenarios presented

This raises significant concerns about how wider society may view and then support male victims of domestic abuse, as they may be less likely to be recognised and less likely to be offered support. This has significant outcomes in terms of responses from service providers and the criminal justice system and raises important questions about how we can support 'non-typical' victims of domestic violence if and when they seek help and justice.

However, it should also be noted that this research was a pilot study and the findings clearly show the need now for wider research and action to tackle these harmful gender stereotypes.”

**Mark Brooks, Chair of the ManKind Initiative, said:** “Men are less likely than female victims to let anyone know they are a victim of domestic abuse. One of the key reasons is that not enough people recognise that men are victims of this crime so they fear not being taken seriously if they do reach out for support.

This ground-breaking research adds further support to these observations, and why we need to do more to raise awareness about male victims and be clear in the messaging that domestic abuse is a crime that happens to men as well as women.

It is also crucial the new Statutory Guidance on domestic abuse fully recognises this barrier that prevents more men escaping. A failure to do so will not only be a missed opportunity, and it will make matters worse.”

According to the Office for National Statistics<sup>2</sup>, nearly half of male victims fail to tell anyone they are a victim of domestic abuse (only 51% tell anyone). They are nearly three times less likely to tell anyone than a female victim (49% of men tell no one as opposed to 19% women). This has worsened since 2015/16 where the figures were 61% for men (88% women).

ENDS

#### Notes to Editors:

- (1) Hine, Ben , Noku, Ledja, Bates, Elizabeth and Jayes, Kealey (2020) *But, who is the victim here? Exploring judgments towards hypothetical bidirectional domestic violence scenarios*. Journal of Interpersonal Violence. ISSN 0886-2605 (In Press): <https://repository.uwl.ac.uk/id/eprint/6816/>
- (2) ONS domestic abuse: findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales: year ending March 2018 (<https://bit.ly/2FY8UYc>)- Table 24 and ONS BCS Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences 2014/15 <http://bit.ly/1p8CGI0> Table 4.28 on Appendix Table: <http://bit.ly/1M1diC5>
- (3) Information about Dr Ben Hine: <https://www.uwl.ac.uk/users/ben-hine>
- (4) The ManKind Initiative ([www.mankind.org.uk](http://www.mankind.org.uk)) is the leading national charity which runs a help-line providing, practical information and emotional support for male victims of domestic abuse and domestic violence. The help-line number is 01823 334244 (weekdays 10am-4pm) which relies on public donations. It also runs an accredited training course, a national conference and a national services directory.

(5) Media Enquiries

Journalists requiring further information please contact Dr Ben Hine on 07870 109326 [ben.hine@uwl.ac.uk](mailto:ben.hine@uwl.ac.uk) or Mark Brooks on 07834 452357 [chairman@mankind.org.uk](mailto:chairman@mankind.org.uk).

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